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SUBJECT Interview with Jeffrey Richelson

LEA THOMPSON: In Lifestyles tonight we're going to examine the super secret world of spies and espionage, the way it really is in the U.S. intelligence community versus the way Hollywood would have us believe it is.

JIM VANCE: This is the world of spies and counter-spies that most of us know.

(Clip of James Bond movie.)

VANCE: It's the James Bonds of the world, performing the most incredible daredevil feats one could imagine. And of course, all the action takes place in exotic places with beautiful scenery such as the Swiss Alps or the Far East. And what would the espionage world be like without the world's most beautiful women?

(Clip of movie.)

VANCE: And lots of high speed chases and car crashes? Looks like the Beltway, doesn't it?

Our guest tonight says the real world of spies and moles is not at all like what we just saw. Please meet Dr. Jeffrey Richelson. He has just written a fascinating book. It is entitled "The U.S. Intelligence Community." Mr. Richelson, welcome. Am I pronouncing your name right, by the way?

DR. JEFFREY RICHELSON: Yes. Correct.

VANCE: Okay, thank you.

-2-

You say in your book that there are more than 30 organizations that make up our intelligence community. That would suggest at least a little if not an awful lot of duplication. Is that a correct assumption?

DR. RICHELSON: Well, there's some. But to a large extent, the large number of agencies is the function of there being many different consumers for intelligence, many different types of intelligence that's required and many different missions.

VANCE: We think...

DR. RICHELSON: So it's not -- it's not a case of total overlap.

VANCE: Okay. You say many different types of intelligence. To most of us I would think what would come to mind would be the military kind of thing. I mean, we're trying to find out what kind of weapons the Russians have and they're trying to find out what kind of secrets that we have. There is much more than that, you're saying.

DR. RICHELSON: Oh, certainly. For example, we're interested in the politics of virtually all countries in the world, whether it's the Soviet Union or Israel or Egypt. We're interested in economic affairs. Certainly oil and energy are two prime collection targets to the United States intelligence. And we're also interested in what may -- might be called sociological or social intelligence, things like ethnic conflicts in various countries including the Soviet Union, dimension -- the dimensions of religious conflicts.

VANCE: Can we -- I'm sorry. Can we presume then that the intelligence community has grown considerably over the last couple of decades and that it might even continue to do so?

DR. RICHELSON: I -- it has certainly expanded remarkably from around 1945 when there was a -- very few intelligence organizations. As we've developed more and -- more sophisticated technical collection systems, as we have developed greater needs for different types of intelligence, so the intelligence community has grown in terms of the number of organizations and manpower.

VANCE: With all of the advanced technology though, do we need as much manpower now? I would think that the technology would reduce the need for the number of bodies around.

DR. RICHELSON: In some cases it's the exact opposite effect because of the fact that the more technical intelligence collection systems you have, such as satellites and aircraft and

-3-

ground stations, the more data you're gathering. And as you gather more data you need more people to analyze it.

VANCE: The fact of the matter is we gave the impression that Hollywood gives us all the James Bond kind of stuff, but there was another Hollywood effort called "Day of the Condor" which portrayed an intelligence employee who had probably one of the most boring jobs in the world. Is that more typical of what intelligence work is really like?

DR. RICHELSON: In fact, his job was probably more interesting than many of the jobs in the intelligence community employees have, because at least he got to read spy novels whereas many of them wind up reading Pravda and Izvestia and trade statistics from the USSR, which is probably far less interesting.

VANCE: One final question in a few seconds. Should we as American citizens feel glad and secure with the growth of intelligence operations that we have in this country now?

DR. RICHELSON: Well, I wouldn't say that it's something that -- that we should feel glad and secure about, unequivocally. There've been certain benefits in the growth of intelligence, specifically the ability to monitor arms control treaties. On the other hand, there've been some serious abuses over the years, and that's something that is a cause for concern in the future.

VANCE: Okay. Dr. Jeffrey Richelson, we thank you. We appreciate it. The book is called "The U.S. Intelligence Community." It is fascinating, by the way. Thank you very much.

DR. RICHELSON: Thank you.